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SUBJECT: Guidance: Middle East Consultations, November
24

¶1. (U) This is an action request. USUN may draw from para two elements when making its intervention during the upcoming Middle East consultations in the Security Council on November 24.

¶2. (SBU) Begin elements:

I thank Under Secretary-General Pascoe for his report.

Advancing the cause of comprehensive peace in the Middle East is among the United States' most important foreign policy endeavors. Our goal is clear: two states living side by side in peace and security -- a Jewish state of Israel, and a viable, independent Palestinian state with contiguous territory that ends the occupation that began in 1967, as well as peace agreements between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon and the full normalization of relations between Israel and its neighbors. The President, the Secretary of State and Special Envoy Mitchell continue to work for the prompt resumption and early, successful conclusion of negotiations between the parties.

The Palestinian Authority and President Abbas are making steady progress to construct the foundation for a viable and responsible Palestinian state. We welcome the PA's development of a detailed, two-year plan to build institutional capacity, and we are pleased to see the rise in economic activity and quality of life in the West Bank. Israel has taken constructive steps to facilitate this progress, removing key checkpoints and withdrawing troops to the outskirts of four cities, but much more needs to be done.

As we have noted, the United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements, and has called for settlement activity to stop. The Israelis have responded to our call by expressing a willingness to significantly curtail settlement activity. While this falls short of our request, if acted upon, it would have a meaningful and significant effect on the ground.

In this context, we were dismayed at the Jerusalem Planning Committee's decision to move forward on the approval process for the expansion of Gilo in Jerusalem. We also object to the continuing pattern of evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes. The status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties.

At a time when we are working to re-launch negotiations, neither party should engage in efforts or take actions that could unilaterally pre-empt, or appear to pre-empt, negotiations. Our focus remains on re-launching negotiations as soon as possible, and we therefore call on all parties to avoid taking steps that would make this effort more difficult.

If Hamas is serious about delivering a Palestinian state, then it will accept the building blocks of that state: renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements between the parties. Hamas' approach, which continues to represent a threat to international peace and security, was a cause of the conflict in Gaza last winter. In light of Hamas' efforts to rearm, all UN members must fulfill their responsibility to prevent illicit arms smuggling into Gaza.

At the same time, we call for a reopening of the crossings, with an appropriate monitoring regime, to allow for the entry of legitimate goods into Gaza, consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 1860. Unless this occurs, hardships and stress that civilians in Gaza face in their daily lives will persist.

We have repeatedly made clear our serious concerns about the Report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict and its recommendations. That said, we also take seriously the allegations of human rights and humanitarian law violations in the report, and note Israel's recent statement that all the incidents cited therein have been or are being examined. We continue to support the need for accountability through thorough and credible domestic investigations. The report has been addressed by the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly and does not need to be addressed by this Council or in other international fora. We do not believe that Hamas has any willingness to investigate and expose its own violations, and demand an end to its deliberate targeting of civilians and its use of the population of Gaza as human shields.

Finally, turning to the situation in Lebanon, we welcome the formation of a new Lebanese government and look forward to its participation in this Council next year. We reiterate our long-standing support for the work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the importance of ending impunity for political violence. We also note the need for all parties to fulfill the provisions of Security Council resolutions 1559, 1680 and 1701. We look forward to the summary in the next 1701 report of the inquiry by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon into the October 12 munitions explosion in Tayr Felsay.

End elements.
CLINTON